

in turn obviously helps the United States economy.

And the results, by the way, speak for themselves. Not only are 85 percent of the businesses competing in SBIR small firms employing 20 or fewer persons, but the program has generated 50,000 patents over 25 years. SBIR has helped thousands of small businesses drive enhancements in our Nation's defense, new protections for our environment, and advances in health care.

The National Research Council and the National Academies' report, in assessment of the Small Business Innovation Research Program, states, "The SBIR program is sound in concept and effective in practice. The SBIR program has created a competitive entrepreneurial environment upon which small, independently owned businesses can compete to strengthen America's high technology economy. Many consider SBIR to be one of our most successful technology development programs."

This rule allows for consideration of a welcomed reauthorization of the SBIR and STTR programs. Just very briefly, what it's going to do is increase the existing set-aside for SBIR to 3 percent, and for STTR to six-tenths of a percent, increase SBIR and STTR grant award levels, increase congressional oversight and evaluation of programs, make changes to shorten the application review periods, and create an outreach development program for underrepresented States, regions, types of businesses, and numbers in the workforce.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. WELCH), for yielding me the customary 30 minutes.

I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, the small business programs covered by this bill are almost totally without their critics; they enjoy widespread bipartisan support. But, Mr. Speaker, there is controversy and opposition to this legislation because of the manner in which Democrats have chosen to conduct the business of this House.

First, there are concerns expressed about the increased set-aside for these two programs, which will come at the cost of other important research. Concern and opposition of this bill has come from the head of the Small Business Administration, from the White House, and from the Association of American Universities, among others, which represents 60 leading research universities across the country.

Typically, there would be an opportunity to address these types of concerns through committee action before any bill comes to the House floor. But

the Democrats have chosen to skip past a hearing of the full House Science Committee on this scientific research legislation. They're just bypassing that step and sending it here to the House floor, where the Democrat-controlled Rules Committee decided to further restrict action on the legislation by limiting the number of House Members who can offer amendments, and they just limited it, Mr. Speaker, to just 17 out of 432 Members in the House.

Now it is true that my Democrat friends on the Rules Committee have allowed some amendments to be offered on this bill, but they have certainly treated themselves very well. Under this rule, Democrat members of the Rules Committee get to offer one-third of the amendments allowed to the entire House. Out of the 17 amendments that would be made in order under this rule, the Rules Committee Democrats get six of them. But under the rules that the Rules Committee wrote, 415 Members will not be allowed to offer even one amendment.

Restricting debate on the House floor is really becoming an old habit for the new Democrat majority, the new Democrat majority that pledged to run a more open, bipartisan House when they won the election in 2006. The Democrat majority has not kept their promise to the American people and have instead passed more closed rules denying all amendments on the House floor than any Congress in history, and they did it in record time.

Despite this record of shutting down debate in the House, the new majority has failed to complete its work and address matters critical to American families, small businesses and the economy. They failed to meet last week's April 5 deadline to write a budget for the next fiscal year, for example. The current farm bill ended last September, and our farmers are still waiting for that bill to be finished.

House Democrats have refused to pass the Senate's bipartisan bill to modernize FISA and to protect our country. Vital tax relief is set to expire while Democrats propose the largest tax increase in American history. Families, workers and small businesses don't need a record tax increase, Mr. Speaker, and they can't afford the plans to cut the child tax credit in half, reinstate the marriage penalty, and raise rates on every single taxpayer.

While Democrats plot these record-breaking tax increases, they sit by while the price of gasoline rises to record levels. Since Democrats took control of Congress in January of last year, the cost of a gallon of unleaded gas has gone up by 50 percent. According to the AAA, the national average for regular unleaded gasoline has gone up \$1.18. The cost of gas has gone up more in 15 months, Mr. Speaker, than it had gone up in the prior 6 years.

Two years ago tomorrow, on April 24, 2006, House Speaker NANCY PELOSI, then the Democrat minority leader, issued a press release claiming that

House Democrats "have a commonsense plan to bring down skyrocketing gas prices." This was 2 years ago tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks after that press release, then minority leader Pelosi said that Democrats have "real solutions" that would "lower the price at the pump." That was 2 years ago, Mr. Speaker, just less than 2 years ago. But now they've controlled the House for over a year, yet the "real solutions" and the "commonsense plan" promised by Democrats are nowhere to be seen. They pledged to lower gas prices, and they've done nothing; gas prices keep climbing.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's time for Speaker PELOSI to reveal the Democrat plan and for this House to be allowed to consider ways to address the rising price of gasoline. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I will be asking my colleagues to defeat the previous question so that I can amend the rule to make in order any amendment to the underlying bill that would "have the effect of lowering national average gas price per gallon of regular unleaded gas." This House can then debate the rising cost of gas and we can have that debate, Mr. Speaker, by defeating the previous question.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I will insert into the RECORD both Speaker PELOSI's 2006 press release and a letter sent yesterday from Republican leaders to Speaker PELOSI asking for the Democrats to put forward the commonsense plan that they had promised.

PELOSI: 'WITH SKYROCKETING GAS PRICES, AMERICANS CAN NO LONGER AFFORD RUBBER STAMP CONGRESS'

WASHINGTON, DC.—House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi released the following statement today on President Bush's, Speaker Hastert's, and the Republican Congress' empty rhetoric on gas prices. Key facts on the Majority's failure to address gas prices follows Pelosi's statement.

With skyrocketing gas prices, it is clear that the American people can no longer afford the Republican Rubber Stamp Congress and its failure to stand up to Republican big oil and gas company cronies. Americans this week are paying \$2.91 a gallon on average for regular gasoline—33 cents higher than last month, and double the price than when President Bush first came to office.

"With record gas prices, record CEO pay packages, and record oil company profits, Speaker Hastert and the Majority Congress continue to give the American people empty rhetoric rather than join Democrats who are working to lower gas prices now.

"Democrats have a commonsense plan to help bring down skyrocketing gas prices by cracking down on price gouging, rolling back the billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies, tax breaks and royalty relief given to big oil and gas companies, and increasing production of alternative fuels."

Key Facts on the Majority's Failure to Address Gas Prices:

President Bush, Speaker Hastert and the Majority Congress wrote and passed a Republican energy bill that President Bush's own Energy Department said would raise gas prices on American consumers. Big oil and gas companies wrote the Republican energy bill, and the American people paid the price.

The Majority rejected imposing tough penalties on price gouging companies three times in the past year, since that time, gas prices increased by another 11 cents a gallon.